

Planning for Future Accreditation Activities

Professional Services Division

October 12, 2004

a. Background

In December of 2002, the Commission made the decision to delay accreditation site visits scheduled for Spring 2003 and for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. The reasoning for the delay was to focus the Commission's accreditation activities on initial accreditation activities. This was in recognition of the impact of the redesign of teacher preparation under SB 2042 on the human and material resources of the program sponsors as well as the Commission's accreditation resources. This allowed both the institutions and Commission staff to devote full effort to an effective transition under the new standards. Institutions having continuing or initial NCATE accreditation were allowed to proceed with the scheduled NCATE/CCTC visits according to adopted protocol.

Subsequent to the Commission action, all program sponsors were notified of the Commission's action by the Administrator of Accreditation. Those that were originally scheduled for the Spring of 2003 or the 2003-2004 accreditation year were told that the visit would be delayed at least two years and that further adjustments in scheduling might be made if the Commission were to make changes in its accreditation policies (Attachment A). All other program sponsors were told that the Commission's action would have a subsequent effect upon the accreditation visits scheduled for 2004-2005 and later. They were told that those visits would be delayed at least one year, possibly two (Attachment B). All program sponsors were advised to stay in contact with the Commission in order to be aware of proposed changes in the accreditation system and in the schedule of site visits.

In March of 2004 the Commission formally took action (at the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation) to continue its suspension of accreditation non-NCATE site visits through the fiscal year 2004-2005. No program sponsors were planning for visits based upon the letter sent out the previous year indicating that the master schedule would likely be revised pending the outcome of the review of the accreditation system undertaken by the Commission. The reasoning for the further delay was to allow continued implementation of SB 2042 as well as completion of the review of the Commission's accreditation policies and at the same time providing some relief for the agency's budget during this time of fiscal uncertainty.

Again, all program sponsors were notified of the Commission's action by the Administrator of Accreditation. Those that were originally scheduled for the 2004-2005 accreditation year were told that the visits would be suspended and that a revised schedule will be developed in the context of the Commission's review of its accreditation policies (Attachment C). Institutions that were scheduled for NCATE/CCTC visits were told that those accreditation visits would be held and conducted under the provisions of the partnership protocol with NCATE (Attachment D). All other program sponsors were told that the Commission's action would have a subsequent effect upon the accreditation visits previously scheduled for 2005-2006 and later. They were informed that the entire accreditation visit schedule will need to be

revised and that a new schedule will be developed in the context of the Commission's review of its accreditation policies (Attachment E). Program sponsors were advised to stay in contact with the Commission in order to be aware of proposed changes in the accreditation system and in the schedule of site visits.

During this period in which accreditation activities were primarily focused on initial program accreditation, all sponsors of teacher preparation programs have submitted initial responses to the SB 2042 standards and all but a handful have completed the review process and are now in full implementation mode. Many of these institutions have also responded to the new Pupil Personnel Services Standards, which were adopted in 2001. Program sponsors are now responding to new standards for the Administrative Services Credential, adopted in 2003. Subject matter preparation program standards for each of the single subject areas have been adopted or are in the process of being developed. Institutions will be developing new subject matter programs to respond to these standards. This will keep many sponsors of educator preparation programs heavily engaged in program development and initial program activities for the next few years.

In summary, while continuing accreditation site visits have been suspended, a great deal of accreditation activity has been underway with the sponsors of preparation programs responding to a wide range of new standards.

In addition, during this period, a total of eight institutions have completed or are scheduled for NCATE/CCTC merged site visits.

b. Scheduling Priorities for Future Site Visits

Based on the discussions of both the COA and the work group to date, it is clear that site visits are a valued part of the current system, and as such, it is very likely that both groups will recommend that accreditation site visits continue to be a part of a revised accreditation process, along with other features. The particular format and structure for future site visits remains a topic for further discussion.

The action taken at the COA meeting in August recognized the importance of providing program sponsors with adequate time to prepare for site visits, even if the exact format and structure for those visits is unclear at this time. Committee members will recall that the Commission has taken two specific accreditation actions relating to the schedule of accreditation visits. Visits have been delayed for the Spring of 2003, for the 2003-2004 fiscal year and for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Based on discussions to date, the work group and the COA appear interested in resuming site visits as soon as it is feasible for both the Commission and for program sponsors. Thus, a revised schedule of accreditation visits should be developed. Upon direction from COA, site visits could pick up where the accreditation visit schedule left off in December 2002. Those sponsors that did not have a visit in Spring 2003 could be scheduled first, then those who were originally scheduled for the 2003-2004 year, and so forth. Program sponsors having never had a previous accreditation site visit, could be scheduled "early" in the process.

b. Transition to Revised Process

The Accreditation Study Work Group and the Committee on Accreditation will be recommending some changes to the Commission's accreditation policies and procedures. A revised accreditation process might feature smaller teams, a changed focus on the visit, a requirement of systematic collection and use of data, and a different accreditation visit cycle, and numerous other possible changes. These aspects will all become more apparent as the review continues to unfold. An important part of implementing a revised system will be the provision of adequate transition time so that institutions and districts will be able to make appropriate preparations. Scheduling of site visits is one aspect of this preparation time, but staff believes a more cohesive plan for transitioning to a new system would assist institutions and the Commission as it moves from a recommendations phase to implementation.

A transition plan would help clarify the activities that would be undertaken as the Commission moves to implementation of the revised system. Undoubtedly, the first year after the Commission adopts its revised policies, the COA would need to be very busy in developing revised procedures. The first year could be devoted to planning, technical assistance and beginning to collect new data that may become a part of the accreditation process. The COA might consider recommending a "phased" transition to the new process setting benchmarks for each year, and expecting all institutions to be at that level of implementation. This could allow a three to four year period before the revised policies are fully implemented, but site visits would not need to be postponed until full implementation is taking place.

Identification of the various components of a transition plan and direction to staff would greatly assist in future communications with preparation programs and could be transmitted to the Commission.

Attachments A, B, C, D, and E (Letters)